

CLAIMS

In the Claims:

This following listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, in the application:

1-24 (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) A base for supporting an article during shipping, the article having a series of feet projecting from one side thereof, and the article having a series of peripheral side panels, the base comprising:

a frame having one or more side edges, each side edge adapted to extend along a side of an article,

the base having one or more sockets having internal sidewalls defining ~~open ended~~ wells in the frame that form receptacles for receipt and engagement of feet of the article, each socket having a bottom wall;

a plurality of flexible ribs extending along the internal sidewalls of the sockets and projecting inwardly into the wells of the sockets, the ribs adapted to deflect and resiliently deform in response to the engagement with the feet of the article upon insertion into the sockets, to retain the base secured to the article and to align the side edges of the frame adjacent the peripheral side panels of the appliance; and

a hole defined in the bottom wall of each socket, the hole being disposed below each of the ribs within the socket, the hole being dimensioned and configured to provide separation between a bottom edge of each rib and the bottom of the socket.

26. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 25 for supporting a four-sided article, wherein the frame has four sides, each side adapted to extend along one of the four side

panels of the article with relatively outer peripheral edge portions of the base positioned adjacent bottom surfaces of the article.

27. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 26, wherein an outer peripheral edge of each of the sides of the frame is recessed relative to an inner portion of the base along the corresponding side panel, creating a gap between the base and adjacent portions of the article along each side thereof.

28. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 25, wherein the ribs in the one or more sockets are vertically positioned and project radially inward from the sidewalls.

29. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 28, wherein the ribs are beveled at their upper edges adjacent the open end of the wells.

30. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 25, wherein the ribs are positioned axially within the wells of the sockets.

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 25, wherein a relatively outer peripheral edge portion of at least one side of the frame is recessed relative to inner portions of the frame along the at least one side, the recess of the outer edge portion along the at least one side creating a gap between the base and adjacent portions of the article.

33. (Currently Amended) A base for shipping and supporting an appliance, the appliance having a series of feet projecting from the bottom surface thereof, and the appliance having a series of peripheral side panels, the base comprising:

a frame having one or more side edges and a central opening, the side edges adapted to extend along a side panel of an appliance, the side edges having a top surface disposed below a top

surface of an inner portion of the base, whereby the frame resists contact between a side edge and a peripheral side panel of an appliance disposed on the frame upon upward bending of a portion of the frame,

the base having at least one socket that defines ~~a an open ended~~ well for receipt of a foot of the appliance;

a plurality of flexible ribs extending along an internal sidewall of the socket and projecting inwardly into the well of the socket, the ribs adapted to deform in response to engagement with the foot of the appliance upon insertion into the socket to grip the foot of the appliance in the socket to maintain the appliance and the base together.

34-35. (Cancelled)

36. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 33, wherein the ribs are positioned axially within the well of the socket.

37. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 33, wherein the ribs are beveled adjacent the upper edge of the socket to facilitate insertion of the foot of the appliance into the socket.

38. (Previously Presented) A base as claimed in claim 33, wherein bottom edges of the ribs are separated from a bottom wall of the socket.

39-44. (Cancelled)

45. (New) A base as claimed in claim 25, wherein the bottom of the socket is disposed above a bottom of the base.

46. (New) A base as claimed in claim 25, wherein the bottom of the socket is disposed above a bottom of the base; whereby additional cushioning is provided by the base for an appliance

disposed on the base.

47. (New) A base as claimed in claim 25, wherein the bottom of the socket further comprises a bulge projecting upward from the bottom wall of each socket, the bulge being structured to resist movement of a foot of an appliance below the bottom edges of the ribs.

48. (New) A base as claimed in claim 33, wherein the side edges extend sufficiently far outward from the inner portion of the frame so that side panels of an appliance disposed on the base will be disposed substantially over the side edges.

49. (New) A base as claimed in claim 33, further comprising a bottom wall within each socket, and a hole defined in the bottom wall of each socket, the hole being disposed below each of the ribs within the socket, the hole being dimensioned and configured to provide separation between a bottom edge of each rib and the bottom of the socket..

50. (New) A base as claimed in claim 49, wherein the bottom of the socket is disposed above a bottom of the base.

51. (New) A base as claimed in claim 49, wherein the bottom of the socket is disposed above a bottom of the base; whereby additional cushioning is provided by the base for an appliance disposed on the base.

52. (New) A base as claimed in claim 49, wherein the bottom of the socket further comprises a bulge projecting upward from the bottom wall of each socket, the bulge being structured to resist movement of a foot of an appliance below the bottom edges of the ribs.